

Free Primary Education in Kenya: An Impact Evaluation Using Propensity Score Methods

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Abstract

This chapter attempts to evaluate the impact of the free primary education programme in Kenya, which is based on the premise that government intervention can lead to enhanced access to education especially by children from poor parental backgrounds. Primary education system in Kenya has been characterized by high wastage in form of low enrolment, high drop-out rates, grade repetition as well as poor transition from primary to secondary schools. This scenario was attributed to high cost of primary education. To reverse these poor trends in educational achievements, the government initiated free primary education programme in January 2003. This chapter therefore analyzes the impact of the FPE programme using panel data. Results indicate primary school enrolment rate has improved especially for children hailing from higher income categories; an indication that factors that prevent children from poor backgrounds from attending primary school go beyond the inability to pay school fees. Grade progression in primary schools has slightly dwindled. The results also indicate that there still exist constraints hindering children from poorer households from transiting to secondary school. The free primary education programme was found to be progressive, with the relatively poorer households drawing more benefits from the subsidy.

Keywords: Primary education, Programme evaluation, Propensity score, Benefit incidence analysis, Kenya

Full text: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-1-4419-6275-1.pdf>